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Elder, Donald

Wrongs righted; or,
The laird and his tenants

Thurso

1887

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28 p. 15 cm.

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 9:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 4/28/97 INITIALS: TLM

TRACKING # : MSH 22309.

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WRONGS RIGHTED;

OR

THE LAIRD AND HIS TENANTS.

A

DRAMATIC POEM

BY

DONALD ELDER.

1887.

Published at the "Courier" Office, Thurso.

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Z
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Anonymous gift
3.8.22

PREFACE.

In giving this little work to the public the author desires to say that it was not orignally written with the intention of publishing, but was written in response to a desire of some of the members of the Westerdale Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society to provide something new and original, of the nature of a dialogue or drama, at one of their public entertainments. Accordingly this little drama was introduced to the public, on the stage, under the auspices of the above named society, where it met a good reception, and drew out a request to have it published, which is now done in compliance with that request.

The title may lead to the supposition that "the land question" forms the burthen of the piece, but it will be seen that that question is only employed to carry along the principle embodied in the lines—

> "The rank is but the guinea stamp;
> The man's the gowd for a' that."

Tormsdale, Halkirk,
September, 1887.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD EQUITY, (Pedlar when disguised)	Proprietor of Ferny Hall Estates, Scotland.
MAXWELL, ...	Private Secretary to Lord Equity.
QUIBBLE, ...	Factor of Ferny Hall Estates.
BUBBLE, ...	A Big Farmer.
JOHN ANDERSON, ...	A Crofter.
MARY ANDERSON, ...	A Daughter to John Anderson.
WILLIE GRAME, ...	A Gardener. Mary's Lover.

A CROFTER.

CROFTERS IN ARREARS OF RENT.

PROLOGUE.

The earth's a stage whereon each member of our race
Must, in life's real drama, take and play some part.
All cannot get the part that they might wish to act;
In this 'tis fate or fortune's will must be obeyed:
But all have got free choice how to acquit themselves,
And in their own respective spheres act well or ill.
Tho' fate may place one in the ranks of poverty,
Yet he, e'en there, may act an honourable part;
And if he does, applause and honour is his due.
And if he upward climbs, and gains a higher place
By means which wont impede nor crush some weaker one,
Then to his credit let his energies redound.
Tho' fate should place one on wealth's giddy pinnacle;
Yet he, e'en there, may act an ignominious part,
And use that power which wealth can give for selfish ends;
And if he does, where lies his claim to honour then?
'Tis only when he wields his power for other's weal
That he can justly claim obeisance and esteem.
Those who would honour one whose only claim to it
Lies in his purse, which is no part of man at all,
Throws honour out of place and from its proper use,
And at the same time injures his own self-respect.
Then let us call our reason and our judgment out
To guide through life, where we should smiles or frowns bestow,
Lest, blindly erring, we do nourish what is wrong,
And crush what we should nourish into greater strength.
Now let the curtain rise; the characters do wait,
That will this text more clearly illustrate.

ACT I.

SCENE.—Room in London. Lord Equity seated. Enter Maxwell.

Max. Tho' 'twas but yesterday that you and I return'd
From foreign lands, where we for sev'ral years sojourn'd,
Yet I have caught some news which I found floating round,
Which, to your lordship's ears, will have unpleasant sound.
'Tis to effect that in the north, on your estate,
Agrarian agitation has sprung up of late.
The public journals do accounts abroad proclaim
That cruel deeds are executed in your name;
And that your tenants, if reports may be believed,
Cry for redress of wrongs with which they are aggrieved.

L. Eq. Now this intelligence which you to me impart
Throws down my mind into disquiet and grieves my heart;
But grieving is of no avail, for 'twill not cure
Nor mitigate the pain a suff'rer does endure.
So, therefore, I intend to use a potent pill
Which will remove this trouble if applied with skill;
But, like a prudent doctor, I have first to know
What's wrong, and where the roots of the disorder grow.
So, with this purpose in my view, I now resolve
To try a scheme, from which such issues may evolve
As will the real aspect of affairs unveil,
And will my knowledge guide straight on this trouble's trail.

Max. It fears me, you will find the cause of the complaint
Somewhere in the machinery of management.
When your estate to Quibble's charge you did commit,
I did express a doubt, as you'll remember yet,
That Quibble's character had crooks and flaws in it.

I told you that his oily speech and mellow smile
Were but the veils he used to screen his latent guile.
But then your knowledge of the world was limited,
And to my cautionings you paid but little heed.
He made you think he was to honesty a prop
By quoting scripture texts and passages from Pope.
You lack'd experience, for you were but a youth,
And, like all honest boys, you thought all loved the truth;
But this opinion from one's mind gets rudely hurl'd
When he more knowledge gains of this deceitful world.

L. Eq. Meantime your fears do lack support, but I, ere long,
Shall sound this case, and find if you are right or wrong.
That we're come back to London Quibble does not know,
And I, without delay, to Scotland straight will go,
Without advising him that we're return'd again,
Lest then the plan I entertain may prove in vain.
Ah! yes, 'tis true, when I left home, I little knew
How much deceit stalks through the world hid from our view;
But now I know the tongue oft moves against the heart,
And that the hand and eye will ready aid impart
To play the hypocrite, and help to carry through
That work which a deceitful heart will bid them do.
'Tis the ungovern'd love of power and love of gold
That breed in human nature evils manifold.
From love of power springs up the tyrant's rod of steel,
For love of gold the poor will to the rich man kneel.
To see one stooping to a tyrant potentate,
Tho' he the baser metal be, excites my hate.
There's something humbling to our nature in the thought,
That mankind's birthright can this way be sold and bought.

But let us stop; 'tis time to cease to moralize,
When call'd upon to give our action exercise.
So, with the work before me steadily in view,
I to the scene of trouble will my way pursue;
While you short time must here remain and bide my call,
When I shall want your presence north at Ferny Hall.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—North of Scotland. In front of Quibble's house. Quibble taking an airing. Meets Pedlar.

Quib. What seek you here? For such as you this is no place
To come except leave be obtained. Your steps retrace.
No tramps nor beggars are allow'd here to encroach,
Yon gate you see should mark the bounds of their approach.
This bear in mind should you again come by this way,
Else here you'll meet less kindness than you've met to-day.

Ped. In troth then, sir, that kindness must be very small
Which must be less, seeing that you now show none at all.
To hope for kindness where there's not civility,
Nor faintest trace of heavenly-born humanity,
Would be a vain and disappointing hope, I know;
Like hoping flowers to find where nought but thorns can grow.
If by your words your sentiments I rightly read,
Then do I learn that selfishness, like baneful weed,
Fills all your thoughts, and so entwines your heart around
That no place for that flower benevolence is found.
Pigs prize a diseased potatoe more than a gem;
In choosing things some men do much resemble them.

Quib. Now cease that gabble which proclaims your impudence,
And let me see your back about, and that at once;

Else at your tatter'd heels this bull-dog I will hound,
That, at my feet now crouching, waits the word to bound;
And he will teach you how to walk more speedily,
Tho' he can't teach you how to talk respectfully.

Ped. Don't be so hasty, sir, still lend your ear to me,
And may-hap on some matters we may yet agree.
I've been where hostile savage men stood up to fight,
And where the lion's roar disturbed the peace of night.
And if you think your threat to set on me that cur
Will make me tremble, then you are mistaken, sir,
I'm now a tramp, and through my boots my toes appear,
But, "judge not horses by the harness that they wear."
My frame is bent, my head does downwardly incline,
But yet my soul may point as straight to heaven as thine.
Would'st thou the jewel cast away if it is good,
Because the casket's made of crack'd decaying wood?

Quib. Ho! ho! I see that 'tis a preacher I have found,
And, like some parsons that I know, I will go bound
The way which he to others points he does not tread;
But follows nature's smoother, softer roads instead.
I am a fool to listen to a ragged tramp
That cant and twitter on his tongue has placed its stamp.
Ha, ha; that you're a righteous tramp you'd make believe,
But 'twill be simpler ears than mine you will deceive.

Ped. From frailties common to our race I am not free,
But like my kind, there is some good and bad in me.
So understand, I do not boast of being possess'd
Of tow'ring excellencies; for oft within my breast
Fair virtue sleeps, and then foul vice usurps the throne,
And virtue, waking, has to fight to gain her own.

'Tis then my spirit, moved like the guardian of a trust,
Springs to her aid, and knocks the other in the dust.
So wanes the power of ill, so thrives the power of good,
As children do who get unequal care and food.
But to this war of words 'tis time to call a truce,
And now my business here I wish to introduce.
I carry almanacks and other little books and things,
The sale of which to me some honest money brings.
I've some small copies of the works of Burns just now,
And doubtless, 'cause the poet himself did hold the plough,
The ploughmen and the crofter class buy not a few,
And now I hope yourself, will buy a copy too.

Quib. What! selling hereabout that senseless ploughman's rhymes;
Well, 'tis no wonder tho' we have unsettled times!
There are too much of Burns' ideas here before,
And you, you ragged rascal, try to make them more.
Seize him Nero! Now make him go; I have gone wrong
To stand this way and parly with a fool so long.

(The dog attacks and is knocked down by the Pedlar who retreats hurridly.)

My lad, but I may meet you yet, and if I do,
Upon my word but I will tan your hide for you.

SCENE II —Interior of John Anderson's cottage John Anderson, Mary Anderson, and Pedlar seated. Enter Quibble and Bubble.

Quib. We were across your farm John Anderson, to-day,
And I conclude that you additional rent must pay,
Or if to this you wont submit, then understand
That I must then deprive you of your pasture land.
My friend here, Mr Bubble, says that 'tis unwise
To let you hold what you can never utilise

To such advantage as he would, or such as he,
Who has more enterprise and more ability.
The other crofters of the glen, as well you know,
Agreed to pass their pasture land some time ago,
Which, Mr Bubble took and joined into one lot,
And now he is prepared to take what you have got.

J. And. You offer two alternatives, take which I may,
'Twill be the same; 'twill end in ruin either way;
And Mr Quibble, I will say before your face,
That 'tis no wonder tho' there's trouble in this place.
Your dealings with the crofters in this place of late
Dispel all doubt, and do most clearly indicate
That Justice, and its lovely sister Equity,
You have excluded from your christianity.

Bub. You speak too bold John Anderson; what right have you
To question your superior's actions, as you do?
Look here! If for the land you hold you cannot pay,
Then shift your camp, and look for land where'er you may,
'Tis my opinion that you crofters ere you're done
Will say this place is yours and all that is thereon.

Quib. Who is that man you've seated in that corner there?
Ha! 'tis that scoundrel of a pedlar I declare.
Well met fellow! I always hoped since first we met
That our acquaintance would not wholly terminate
Till we had reckon'd up and settled our accounts;
So now we'll see to what the reckoning amounts.
Now then just let us hear what you have got to say
For having nearly kill'd my dog the other day?
Say on if you have ought to utter in defence,
Of this same charge, and of your matchless impudence!

Ped. Well sir, that I knock'd down your dog I wont deny,
But that same action I will amply justify;
In self-defence I did it, and regret it not,
Indeed, that blow it was yourself, sir, should have got;
For 'twas at your command that he attacked me;
Now then how like you that sort of apology?

Quib. John Anderson just show that pedlar to the door,
I had too much of his presumptuous tongue before;
I do demean myself, and waste my breath in vain,
For he, tho' wrong, his own opinions will maintain.
'Twould soil my hands or else I would make him repent
Of his behaviour by corporal chastisement;
And you must bear in mind that he, or such as he,
Must not on this estate hereafter harbour'd be.

J. And. I do not see why I should turn this poor man out
Seeing that I'm not at all concern'd in your dispute.
He came here wet and worn, sought lodgment for the night,
I granted it, and do maintain I have the right
To hold my word to him and keep my promise true,
So at this time your bidding I refuse to do.

Bub. Good Scotland! Do you hear the silly blockhead prate
'Bout keeping words and promises to men like that.
If in this way he tries to keep his conscience clear,
Then 'tis enough to make one either laugh or swear.
Upon my word the times are going fairly wrong;
These crofters will put matters to the swine ere long.
On breaking rules and changing laws there minds are bent,
And soon they may put pedlars into parliament.

J. And. If we be truthful for the sake of truth itself,
We'll keep our word the same, be't to a king or serf.

If in our dealings we be honest to a peer
But to a peasant false, then does it not appear
That 'tis not genuine honesty that rules the mind?
But honesty that's of a base and spur'ous kind,
Like coin that's false with coat of gold and heart of brass,
That should not be with genuine coin allow'd to pass.
'Tis true indeed we're striving hard to get new laws,
Nor do we make a stir and din without a cause.
May mercy frame, and goodness give both strength and speed
To laws to save the poor man from the rich man's greed—
To laws that of the poor man's cause would take good care,
And curb the power of men like you and Quibble there.

Quib. (in a rage) May curses blight the wicked spirit of the times
That taints the social atmosphere of northern climes;
A fierce rebellious monster it has grown to be,
That nurses stubborness and mocks authority.
At ev'ry point my will's opposed and foil'd by it,
But my authority will reign triumphant yet.
My suff'ring patience up till now has stood the strain,
And 'tis no wonder that it now has snapp'd in twain;
Elastic rope will snap if you too far will draw,
The camel's back will break beneath the hindmost straw;
But I, into my rule, fresh vigour will instill,
And force this rising power to bend beneath my will—
And this is how I'll gain the mastery over it—
I'll turn them out who to my orders wont submit;
And you, John Anderson, my orders disobey,
So you can look out for yourself at Whitsunday.

SCENE III.—The same. Night. Pedlar sleeping. Mary Anderson crying beside the fire. Enter Willie Grame.

M. And O! Come away, Willie; I'm sitting lonely here,
And longingly I've waited for your coming, dear.
Some hours ago to bed my father did retire
His grief to hide, while mine I nurse beside the fire;
And when you'll hear the news, you too shall grieve I know—
Our present hopes lie crush'd beneath a single blow;
O! yes, our cheris'd hopes have fall'n, and plans we form'd
In ruins lie, like palaces that have been storm'd.
'Twas Quibble dealt the blow that brings our plans to nought,
And to my father's heart and mine this sorrow brought.
Accompanied by Bubble, Quibble call'd to-day,
And by the terms he offer'd us on which to stay,
'Tis evident he wish'd for some pretext, or quirk,
That he might us evict and justify the work.
A homeless, wand'ring man now sleeps behind yon screen
Whom Quibble knows, and angry words pass'd them between;
When we refused to turn this poor man from the place
Then Quibble hurl'd EVICTION in my father's face.

W. Grame. Yes, Mary dear, 'tis heavy news you give me now,
But let not sorrow dim your eye nor cloud your brow.
Man may deprive us of our rights, our plans confound,
Our air-built castles tear in ruins to the ground,
But Heaven o'er-rules, and will the power of man withstand,
If he against what Heaven owns would raise a hand.
That love is clothed in purity, which we now share,
And out of Quibble's reach and in an angel's care.
To raise our hearts to heaven, Love has been sent to earth;
Sometimes it quits the hall and seeks the humble hearth,
'Cause neither gold nor avarice can it secure,
Were this not so, then would the poor indeed be poor.

'Tis true the future, which appear'd to us so bright,
Is now o'er-shadow'd by the gloomy clouds of night.
We hoped to share this hearth and home, while I would take
The yoke of labour off your aged father's neck.
But let us now talk in a cheery hopeful strain,
So cheer your heart and let me see you smile again.

M. And. As flies the gloom of night before the sun's bright ray,
So do your words of hope my sorrow chase away;
My sorrow would indeed be small for my own sake,
The high behests of fate submissively I'd take;
But well I know, much will my father mourn and grieve,
When he his childhood and his manhood's home must leave.
To me the thought that Quibble can't divide out hearts
Is like a shield that wards off sorrow's poignant darts.

W. Grame. You know full well, you stole my heart some time ago,
And I, to punish you for that offence you know,
Wish'd you to come to share with me my humble lot,
And tie our joys and sorrows in one single knot;
But you refused to leave your father here alone,
'Cause all his kindred, save yourself, from him are gone.
My wish is still unchanged, my home is yonder yet,
And by my hearth your father too a place will get.
Of wordly gear I have but scanty share 'tis true,
But I've a strong and willing arm to work for you.
What matters it if sweet contentment be our lot,
If we in lofty palace dwell, or lowly cot.
Mayhap that begging man now lying sleeping there
Has got a calmer mind than has a millionaire.

M. And. That poor man may not be asleep. but may o'er hear
All what we say, if he but give a list'ning ear.

He is a man on whom misfortune dealt a blow;
That he has occupied a higher rank I know.
For in his talk and conduct, I can clearly see
Despite his weeds, the traces of gentility.

W. Grame. Some men will fall from lofty, down to low estate,
Through self-defects, 'cause wisdom they don't cultivate;
But to "man's inhumanity to man" is due
The shadow'd lives of many more, tho' sad 'is true.
The rich man has a strength, which, if he rightly wield,
He will not hurt, but will from harm the poor man shield;
But if he does his harm extend, his help retain,
Then will his wealth no blessing prove, nor credit gain.
But like a giant he, that would a child infest,
His strength in cowardice itself does manifest.

M. And. Now that is philosophic language, Willie lad,
But change the theme; you see I am no longer sad,
So let us leave the good, the bad, the poor, the rich,
And talk of things that do ourselves more closely touch;
But first I'll sing that little song you like to hear,
For now I feel in singing mood 'cause you are here.

(Sings) Is there a heart so cold and sear
Whose language is **myself alone,**
That only to itself is dear,
Nor love nor friendship to it known?
Such heart would be like sterile waste,
Where shines no sun, where fall no showers;
In icy atmosphere incased,
Receives no warmth, nor yields it flowers.
The heart no happiness can know
That wanders lone like Noah's dove,

That feels not friendships's warm glow,
That feels not sympathy or love.
Tho' we to wealth should toiling press,
And tho' we grasp the sparkling prize,
In hopes to gain true happiness,
But lo! before us still it flies.
If we that happiness would find,
Which still abides this whirling sphere,
'Tis in the sweet contented mind,
And with the loving and sincere.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—Ferny Hall Estates Office. Quibble and Maxwell seated.

Max. Commission'd by Lord Equity I've come to-day
To see how fares it with you since we went away.
On our return his lordship wish'd at once to learn
The shape and hue of matters which do him concern.
Much discontent amongst the tenants reigns, you say,
And some, you tell me, have refused their rents to pay,
Without assigning solid cause to justify
Such lawless course, but to excuse themselves they try
By urging and by crying out that they're oppress'd,
And that they've wrongs from which they seek to be redress'd.
Wrongs which, you say, are void of substance and are nought
Save phantoms, which their fancy into being brought.
Into this matter I desire to search at once
For 'tis unwise to let the issue rest on chance:
For discontent, uncheck'd, will nurse itself and grow
Until rebellion, if not war, from it will flow.

'Tis easier far to crush the weed's first tender sprout
Than, after it has grown awhile, to root it out.
Those who refuse their rents to pay them hither send,
That I may hear how their refusal they defend.

Quib. Yes sir, your will shall be fulfill'd, but ere I leave,
I would explain some things, and do a hearing crave,
You being for years abroad and from this place estranged
May have imperfect knowledge of how times have changed.
Of recent years, I grieve to tell, throughout the north,
A lawless and rebellious spirit has gone forth.
His lordship's tenants were with peace and comfort blest
Till of this evil spirit they became possess'd.
Now 'mongst the crofter class rebellion fumigates,
And makes one dread that crime but in suspension waits.
When we a ploughman hear, whose place it is to toil,
Talk with an air which fits an owner of the soil,
As has of late been far too frequently the case—
We know that he has lost all knowledge of his place
Upon the social scale—a case, which view'd aright,
Should our compassion and our censure both excite.
I know our current literature is much to blame
For having kindled up this Democratic flame,
Which sparkles now, and will yet higher rise and spread
Being by such dang'rous and unsettling doctrines fed
As those promulgated by Henry George, and scattered far
Throughout the land, dethroning peace, installing war.
What by such Socialistic schemes is being taught
Is surely with the elements of mischief fraught;
For such like schooling but to revolution points,
And therefore surely tends to lose of society the joints.

Now sir, the cause why on this theme I've dwelt so long
Is that you may more easily judge 'tween right and wrong;
For now you know the method of the arguing
Which they, with bias'd minds, in their defence will bring;
And now you know what weapons you have need to wield
To crush this lawless spirit down and make it yield.
The humbler classes ought to understand, that they
Should their superior submissively obey;
Else we may bid farewell to order law, and rule,
If those beneath our sway will us direct and school.
Now, in conclusion, I may say that much I mourn
For this untoward state of things on your return,
But I, my management from blame, will vindicate;
For since I honour'd was with charge of this estate,
I by all honest means his lordship's interest sought,
And did pursue such course as would that end promote;
And with that end in view to do I always tried
What wisdom guided, and what reason justified.

Max. I've heard your tale, but will hold judgement in suspense
Untill I hear the crofters utter their defence.
To judge a cause no honest man would ever dream,
Until the whole be weigh'd by an impartial beam.
'Tis late to-day, tomorrow cite them to appear
To plead their cause, while I shall give attentive ear.

SCENE II.—Room in Bubble's house. Bubble seated, Enter Quibble.

Bub. Ho! Mr Quibble. Glad to see you; come along,
And let me hope there has not anything gone wrong.
Just like all other bachelors, ha, ha, you see
I'm quite alone, and your're in excellent time for tea.

Quib. I've been in better mood for tea than I'm to-night,
Some pressing matters have destroy'd my appetite.
Lord Equity and Maxwell from abroad have come,
And I'm concern'd 'bout things that's not in proper trim.
To-morrow Maxwell wants a meeting at the Hall,
To which, all crofters in arrears, he bids me call.
They'll blab and blether, whine and growl, and tell lies too,
For 'tis inherent in their nature so to do.
They'll blame the laws, the land, the wind, the rain, the snow,
And me, and everything except themselves, you know.
You must come down and take my part should they attempt
To show that I used harshness in my management,
And to uphold the policy pursued by me
Of joining farms, as being of much utility.
Maxwell is home, his lordship does in London stay,
Lest so I think, and he too may come any day.
Their coming back, and that without a warning note,
Has to my mind no little botheration brought.
With time I would have matters smooth enough
That now, on the estate, appear unhinged and rough.
I do not know how Maxwell's sympathies incline,
But much I fear his views with ours will not combine.
I told my tale and spread my views before his face,
But to which side his mind inclines I could not trace.

Bub. Pooh ! Mr Quibble, now hold on ; that's quite enough ;
Untill this night I never heard you talking " stuff."
Your stomach's wrong ; come, take a bowl of punch with me,
Then all your idle fears like chaff away will flee.
Maxwell,s a good conservative, no doubt of it,
What other creed could one in his position fit ?

Just think, good sir, are we not gentlemen by birth,
And wont our naked word outweigh a plebeian's oath.
Just let those grumbling crofters come and prate their fill,
I'll make their "jaw" of small avail, aye that I will.

Quib. Bravo ; Bubble. I am not now so much afraid
To face those crofters when I have thy powerful aid.

Bub. But now you're anxious to be off, I see, so take
Another glass before you go for friendship's sake.
To-morrow I'll be at the Hall, you may depend,
And if your management's assail'd, I'll it defend ;
But Maxwell can't be such a fool, nor such a "flat"
As side the crofter lot 'gainst you, I'll bet my hat.

Quib. Now by-the-bye, when in your avenue to-night,
There did I see his impudence yon pedlar wight.
I saw him prying round and looking here and there
Just all the same as tho' the place was 'neith his care.
On my approach he bolted through a hedge, and lay
Till I went past, and then he slowly skulk'd away.
Your corn and premises I would advise you watch
Lest to your property he sets a lighted match

Bub. Pooh ! let them blaze away, my boy, I have secured
My property 'gainst loss by having it insured.
Now let not foolish fears your happiness destroy;
So cheer your heart and drink your glass of punch, my boy.

ACT IV.

SCENE—A Room in Ferny Hall House. Maxwell seated.
Enter Crofters in Arrears of Rent.

Max. On coming here I was surprised and grieved to hear
That you have all refused to pay your rents this year.

I ask you in Lord Equity, your landlord's name,
If you have ought to say to clear yourselves from blame?

A Crofter. I'll be the spokesman of my class; just hear me pray,
We have substantial cause why we refuse to pay—
We've been deprived of pasture land on this estate,
Without reduction in our rents proportionate.
We've no desire to hold from any one his due,
'Tis paying what's unjust that we refuse to do.

Max. I did not know that was so. Bring Quibble here
To see what light he will make this case appear.

Exit. Crofter and returns with Quibble.

Mr Quibble, was it Lord Equity's command
That these men here should be deprived of pasture land?

Quib. Well sir, I had not his express authority
For this, nor any other changes wrought by me,
Nor did I need, 'cause when he left he did invest
Me with the power to judge and do what I thought best.
Upon this case I did my judgement exercise,
And took what course I saw judicious and wise.
When crofters hold good pasture land that profit yields
Then they neglect the careful working of their fields,
And when there's no necessity to toil, you know
That sloth and laziness are certain there to grow.
Now since these men do from their toil their incomes raise
They have adopted thrifty and industrial ways.
The rules laid down for them contemptuously they spurn'd,
And 'gainst my will the heather on the hill they burn'd,
Till now there's not enough to hide a moor-cock's head,
And from the hill the rabbits and the hares have fled.

A Crofter. I see, Quibble, that you can paint a picture well
To suit yourself; but we've another tale to tell—
Upon your picture we another light can bring—
A light which I expect will mar your colouring.
Your zeal to gain your ends is too impetuous
Else in our presence you would be more cautious,
And would not rashly throw insulting language out,
Nor charges make which you must know we can refute.
Not one of us did ere refuse his rent to pay
Until the pasture land we held was ta'en away;
We did not burn the heather off as you have said,
Itself will prove that you a naked lie have made.
That we one reasonable rule did disobey
I to your face, Quibble, distinctly do deny.

Max. I've heard you both; but now what proofs have you to show
So that my judgment straight in justice's path may go?

Quib. I'll bring Bubble a man of sense and wisdom, sir,
And in what I have said I'm sure he will concur.

Exit. Quibble and returns with Bubble.

Bub. Ho! Maxwell, my good sir, what for is all this din?
Are you in earnest now, or are you just in fun?

Max. I'm holding this enquiry earnestly indeed,
And that my search for truth may make some better speed
Tell how these men conduct themselves, I do request,
And if you think they've been in any way opress'd?

Bub. Well, sir, they're just a lawless and rebellious lot,
One particle of common sense they have not got.
Time-honour'd customs, sir, they trample under foot,
And fancies strange have in their noddles taken root.

Each one of them, I do believe, thinks he was born
The lawful heir to hills of heath and fields of corn;
And as each claims the land that lies within his view,
'Tis no wonder tho' there is a hallooballoo.
Ha! ha! they say that they're oppress'd; that they're so poor;
That they can not the needed wants of life secure;
But you should see them in the towns or at the fairs,
They drink like fishes, sir, and then they fight like bears.

Enter John Anderson.

J And Pray, Mr Maxwell, listen now to my complaint—
I've never been a farthing in arrears of rent,
Yet I am under Quibble's stern command to leave,
And much this order makes my aged heart to grieve.
Could I but see Lord Equity himself, I know
This order he'd revoke, and save me from this blow.
But I do hope yourself has got the power and will
To let me stay, and Quibble's cruel threat annul.

Quib. He lies! he lies! I never threaten'd such a thing,
'Tis a foul falsehood that he in my teeth does fling.
This accusation, sir, he cannot verify,
If so he thinks, then in our presence let him try.

Exit. John Anderson and returns with Mary Anderson and Pedlar.

J. And. My statement to confirm my witnesses are here,
And to their testimony now pray lend an ear.

Max. Now, Mary Anderson, did you hear Quibble say
Your father would have to remove at Whitsunday?

Mary Answers—"Yes sir"

Well now, Pedlar, what do you know about this case;
Tell, if you know, was this man told to quit his place?

Ped. Well sir, it chanced I lodged at Anderson's that day
That Quibble call'd, and with my ears I heard him say
To Anderson, that he at term must leave this place,
Now that's the truth, and that I'll hold to Quibble's face.

Bub. Now, Maxwell, let me speak, and let this mock'ry stop.
You're not to take a beggar's evidence I hope.
Such men to swear a falsehood will not hesitate,
Their conscience being dead or in a dormant state.
Should you want witnesses to swear that white is black,
Then such as he, if paid, would do it in a crack.
Humbug and nonsense that's the summing of it all—
Along with Quibble I, on Anderson did call,
He did not threaten to evict, else I would hear,
And surely that's enough to make the truth appear?

Max. No sir, your evidence is not enough alone;
You see we have two witnesses for Anderson.

Bub. Two witnesses for Anderson! Well I declare!
If you will weigh the evidence of such a pair
'Gainst such as ours, 'twould be the strangest thing on earth.
Pray, bear in mind that we are gentlemen by birth.

Max As you the title of a gentleman do claim,
Now, Bubble, pray, tell us the nature or the name
Of the foundation which you build this claim upon,
That we may know if 'tis on stubble or on stone.

Bub. I'll let you see my claim is founded on the rock,
I have two thousand pounds in cash besides my stock.
My father was a man of money and of worth,
And I was rear'd in gentle fashion from my birth.
I never handled pick nor spade, nor cart nor plough,
But always was a gentleman as I am now.

J. And. Till now I did not know that gentlemen could give
False evidence, tho' 'twould from injury them save,
Yet here is one, a gentleman who claims to be,
But yet he trifles with the truth most shamefully.
That Quibble threaten'd to evict, he knows full well,
But then it does not suit him now the truth to tell;
Because he's got the lands the crofters had of yore,
But yet he is not satisfied, but looks for more,
And fancied mine, as Quibble told me to my face;
But, pray, don't give it him to feed his avarice.

Bub. Less impudence, John Anderson, and hold your peace;
The way you crofters now behave is a disgrace;
You do conduct yourselves just like a lot of fools:
You are as obstinate and stupid as the mules.
Superiors you do not seem to recognise,
Because you're lost to all that's good beneath the skies.

Quib. Yes, Mr Maxwell, Bubble speaks the truth indeed,
And to what he has said, I hope you will give heed;
And if you do, you'll see that 'tis a great mistake
To listen to the charges which these crofters make.

Max. But, Quibble, 'twas to listen to them I came here,
I'll do my duty without favour, sir, or fear.

Quib. Since that is so, then do I wish Lord Equity
Himself was with us here, that he our judge might be.

Lord Equity (transforming from "The Pedlar" by throwing off disguise)

Upon this spot, Quibble, fulfill'd shall be thy wish!
Lord Equity now stands before you in the flesh!

Cheers by Crofters. Quibble quails. Bubble retreats towards the door, is ordered back and returns.

Ha! now, Quibble, why pales your cheek? Why drops your eye?
Why aren't you glad when I your wish do gratify?
Your haughty looks and lofty mien you now let fall.
And there you stand just like a captured criminal.
A captured knave you are at least, without a doubt,
"The Pedlar" was a cunning boy and found you out;
And learn from this—to all be civil, if not kind,
And never hound your dog again at pedlars, mind.
Ah! Quibble, I have watch'd you closely here of late,
And now I know why peace has fled from my estate.
That trust which I reposed in you, you have abused,
And in my name, for selfish ends, your powers have used.
Your cruel sway has put a blot upon my name,
And given me a most unenviable fame.
Your threat to aged Anderson just lets one see
Your mode of work; then to deny't was cowardly.
In short, you are a coward, knave, and hypocrite,
Your sentence is—"Go leave my service and my sight."

Exit. Quibble.

Well now, Bubble, you are a gentleman, you say,
But my opinion of you leans the other way.
'Gainst Anderson you too a lie have told to screen
Yourself from blame, which tells you are in spirit mean.
Because you've wealth you claim respect and honour too,
But on these grounds alone I will not give it you.
What tho' your ancestors were kings, and you by birth
Could claim to be the abs'lute monarch of this earth!
And what tho' fawning minions bend beneath your will,
And pamper'd menials your ev'ry wish fulfil!

Yea, tho' you had more wealth than avarice could crave,
Yet for all this you still might be a fool or knave.
He is the gentleman who loves his neighbour best,
Tho' of a copper coin he may not be possess'd;
And, Bubble, mind with all the wealth that's in your store,
Your rank is 'neath the slave who loves his neighbour more.
Now, Bubble, I do pity more than blame you, mind,
And therefore I have no desire to be unkind;
But would endeavour so to train your mental sight,
That you more easily could distinguish wrong from right.
No longer in your wealth alone repose your trust,
For 'tis a glitt'ring bubble that will fly to dust.
Trust in good works, and noble deeds, these wont decay,
But will live on when sun and moon shall fade away.
'Tis noble work to lend a hand to succour those
Who fall and lie beneath misfortune's crushing blows.
'Tis right that we the good and worthy should esteem,
But, mind, to it the rich and poor have equal claim.
Then if you would one's claim to honour try to find,
Just search for it amongst his qualities of mind;
And never estimate mere accident of birth
'Bove excellence of soul, or sterling honest worth.
Now Bubble, go, I do not wish to do you harm,
In hopes you'll mend I'll let you hold a single farm.

Exit. Bubble.

Come nearer, Mary Anderson, before we're through
I've got a kindly word or two to say to you.
Now, Mary, do not blush, nor turn aside your head,
You have no cause to fear, nor be ashamed indeed.

'Tis true "the pedlar," sly rogue, did over-hear
Your tale of love and sorrow too to your own dear;
But then he heard and saw what pleased him very well,
But all he heard and saw at present he'll not tell.
In palaces with lords and ladies great I've been,
And 'neath the glitt'ring veil of pomp and pride I've seen
The poison'd shafts of envy pierce the heart of pride
And there I've seen vice dashing virtue to aside.
In midst of luxury I have seen misery
Which by themselves being brew'd deserves no sympathy.
Pleasures they have, 'tis true, but also pleasure's pain,
'Cause pleasure's cup down to its very dregs they drain;
But at your hearth I saw the unity of mind,
And pleasures too that leave no bitter sting behind;
And there I heard the words of sympathy and cheer,
And saw the loving deed perform'd to stem the tear;
Such deeds shall triumph o'er the tomb, and live and bloom
Long after ruin o'er Creation's face shall come.
Alas! for them who do not find a firmer base
Than pounds and pence whereon their hope and trust to raise.
But to conclude. Kind hearted Mary Anderson,
You and your father 'll have a home while I have one;
And you shall wed young Willie Grame, and may you be
Attended by contentment and prosperty.

Exit. Mary Anderson.

I've something now to say to you, John Anderson,
And to the other crofters here, and then I'm done.
Indeed I was, in part, the cause, as now you know
Of causing Quibble's vengance o'er your head to flow.

"The pedlar" wont forget the man who nobly stood
On his behalf, but now will show his gratitude.
You'll have your home while you have life you may depend,
And more than that, I greatly will your farm extend,
So that your daughter and her future husband may
Have room to give their energies abundant play.
I've lately watch'd the movements of your hand and mind,
And found you honest, just, and to your fellows kind.
From this we know that you are rich in Heaven's own gold,
And that you therefore do more precious treasures hold
Than Bubble with his flocks and herds and all he's got,
And that you are a gentleman, but he is not.

Now all you other crofters here may be assured
That of the trouble you complain you will be cured.
Yes, you will have more land and Bubble will have less,
And in this way, I hope, I will your wrongs redress.
And I may tell you now before you go away
That I intend hereafter in your midst to stay,
And 'neath the rule of justice and humanity
I'll hope to see restored peace and tranquility.

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